

Mindful Monday  
Winter Wellness Week

### **MONDAY: Mindful Monday**

Whether you have done some mindfulness before, or if you are an absolute beginner, explore these adult wellness practices for healthy mind, body and spirit. After experiencing these practices for yourself, then try the five-pointed star breathing lesson with your students.

#### **Mindfulness Resources for Adults**

Patricia Jennings, a leader in the field of Social Emotional Learning and Mindfulness in Education, has studied teacher stress and how it impacts the social and emotional context of the classroom and student well-being and learning. In this article she discusses the [Seven Ways Mindfulness Can Help Teachers](#) by training our minds consciously to become more aware of our inner and outer experience, and learning how to manage our emotions.

There are many ways to practice mindfulness. Here are a few links featuring different modalities. Try all four and find the one that is right for you!

**Breathing:** [A 5-Minute Breathing Meditation To Cultivate Mindfulness](#)

**Gratitude:** [A Simple Weekly Mindfulness Practice: Keep a Gratitude Journal](#)

**Loving-Kindness:** [A Loving-Kindness Meditation to Boost Compassion](#)

**Body Scan:** [A 3-Minute Body Scan Meditation to Cultivate Mindfulness](#)

These links are from the [Greater Good Science Center](#) where you can find even more resources.

*“I think one of my biggest roles as a teacher is to provide my students with a place that they feel safe coming to and being in every single day. I think mindfulness plays a large role in making this possible. In terms of my own personal practice, mindfulness has helped me in the way I show up for students. I am able to be more present when responding to their needs, and am able to take a breath before I react to a situation. Overall, taking time out of my day for my own self-care has helped make me a calmer, more consistent, and loving teacher.”*

--Rachel Powers is a bilingual 3rd grade teacher at Andersen United Community School and a Year 2 participant in Wellbeing in Service of Teaching and Learning (WiSTL) a Mindfulness in Education program at Andersen and Barton working in collaboration with the University of Minnesota's Earl E. Bakken's Center for Spirituality and Healing.

#### **Mindfulness of Breathing Lesson for Students:**

After you've practiced the mindfulness exercises for yourself try this mindful breathing lesson with your students.

#### **Five-Pointed Star Breathing**

**Materials needed:** Draw or project a five-pointed star on a whiteboard and/or have students draw a large five-pointed star on paper. When drawing the star use all the space on the paper, going to the outer edges so it's big enough to trace with a finger.

Let's start by noticing our breath. Take 3 belly breaths with students. Now, connecting with the rhythm of your breath we are going to trace the outline of a star. Breathe in as we trace the first line of the star, breathe out as we trace the next line. Continue to move your finger across the outline of the star with each breath in and out. Keep your eyes on the star and feel your finger as you trace the star. When you get to the end of the last line of the star you can start over and continue the star breathing again. It is natural for the mind to wander, when it does gently come back to the breath and the awareness of the hand tracing the five-pointed star.

**Class discussion:** "How might this activity be useful when you feel stressed or triggered by a strong emotion?" Students may suggest things like, "It helps me focus my attention and then I notice my body and mind calming down." The students may discover after a few days of practice that they can now do it mentally in their mind's eye without moving their finger. "How do I feel right now? Do I feel differently than I did when I started?" "How is my breath? What did I notice?"

**Variation:** You can also do this without a star and simply use your hand. Hold up your hand with all five fingers extended wide. With your other hand start to trace each finger. Breathing in while tracing up one side of a finger and breathing out while tracing down the other side of the same finger, then move on to the next finger. Keep your eyes on your hand while tracing each finger, paying attention to what it feels like. When you get to the last finger (thumb or pinky) go back and trace each finger again while breathing in and out.